

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Case File No.: AA-44380

EA No.: AK-040-99-003

Type of Action: Sec. 302, FLPMA Lease (2920)
Commercial Occupancy Lease

Location: Section 18, T. 30 S., R. 55 E., Copper River Meridian

Applicant: Albert C. Gilliam
P. O. Box 124
Haines, AK 99827

Prepared By: Kathy Stubbs, Realty Specialist

Preparing
Office: Bureau of Land Management
Anchorage Field Office
6881 Abbott Loop Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99507

Date: February 9, 1999

I. INTRODUCTION:

Albert Gilliam has applied to renew his commercial occupancy lease which expires March 1999. This site has been in operation as an outfitter and guide base camp since 1982, and authorized by the existing lease in 1989. The base camp site is well established and has been in place for approximately 16 years. The structures are located on gravel clearings. All camp structures are maintained during the field season to include periodic painting, roof and stove pipe maintenance, and cleanup and upkeep of the camp.

A. Need for the Proposed Action:

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to continue use of an outfitter and guide base camp operated by Al Gilliam, owner/operator of Alaska Cross Country Guiding and Rafting. Mr. Gilliam uses a site on Le Blondeau Glacier located at Section 18, T. 30 S., R. 55 E., Copper River Meridian.

B. Conformance With Land Use Plan:

No land use plan exists for this area. However, this environmental analysis assesses the impacts of the Proposed Action and provides a basis for a decision on the proposal (43 CFR 1610.8 (b)(1)).

C. Alternative Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail:

An alternative to relocate the base camp to another location miles away, probably on state or private properties outside the Tsirku River drainage, was considered. However, this would entail the complete construction of another base camp which would include the removal and/or disruption of trees, bushes, and soils. Because the current site is already constructed and in use, the relocation and construction of another site is not a reasonable alternative. This alternative will not be considered further in this document.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

A. Proposed Action:

The Proposed Action is to continue use of an outfitter and guide base camp operated by Al Gilliam, owner/operator of Alaska Cross Country Guiding and Rafting. Mr. Gilliam uses a site on Le Blondeau Glacier located at Section 18, T. 30 S., R. 55 E., Copper River Meridian (see attached map).

The site contains the following improvements: a 14' x 28' bunkhouse; 2 out buildings for storage of a generator, tack and equipment; and an outhouse. These structures were relocated to the existing spot by BLM and then authorized by the lease that is now up for renewal. No additional structures have been constructed since the lease was issued in 1989. The cabin is heated by a wood stove, but Mr. Gilliam wants to upgrade in the future to a small oil stove. Downed wood is collected to burn in the stove. Trash is hauled out by an air boat and final disposition is in a village landfill.

The outhouse is located approximately 100 feet from the cabin and approximately 300 feet from the river bank. An approval for onsite residential water and sewer systems was issued by the State of Alaska January 26, 1999.

Water is obtained from a natural artesian spring located near the cabin.

Fuel is stored in the generator building year round. Three five-gallon jerry cans are allocated for the generator and two five-gallon jerry cans for the air boat. Mr. Gilliam averages under ten trips to the base camp each season. On trips into the base camp he brings fuel by air boat to replenish the supply when needed.

Access is by a heliocourier (fixed wing airplane) which lands on a gravel bar that is between a quarter mile to a half mile from the bunkhouse. Other means of access are by skiing, and air boat. About half of the guided tours are day trips and the other are 1-2 day trips. More than one trip to the site may occur during a week. Garbage is regularly stored and transported off site by air boat when the site is in use. No other off-road vehicles are utilized. Mr. Gilliam is considering the use of a 4-wheeler for hauling gear and supplies to the bunkhouse from the landing strip.

The lease would be for a period of 30 years, subject to the following: 1) the lease will terminate upon conveyance to the State of Alaska; 2) the lease will terminate upon non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the lease; and 3) the applicant or holder will comply with the requirements of the annual Special Recreation Permit, specifically the requirements contained in 43 CFR 8370.

The base camp is used seasonally, April through November.

B. Alternative A: No Action Alternative:

The No Action Alternative would require the removal of all facilities at the base camp and rehabilitation of the existing site.

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT:

A. General Setting:

The lands included in this lease application are situated southerly of the Tsirku River at the foot of the Le Blondeau Glacier approximately 30 miles from Haines, Alaska. The valley floor is a large floodplain bisected by the Tsirku River and is vegetated with a mixture of alder and willow interspersed with patches of spruce and cottonwood. The soils are glacial till.

B. Critical Elements:

The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed and are either not present or will not be affected by the Proposed Action or alternative:

Air Quality
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Cultural Resources
Environmental Justice
Farmlands (Prime or Unique)
Native American Religious Concerns
Subsistence
Threatened and Endangered Species
Water Quality (Drinking/Ground)
Wetlands/Riparian Zones
Wild and Scenic Rivers
Wilderness

1. ANILCA Section 810 Clearance:

It was determined that no ANILCA, Section 810 compliance or clearance evaluation is required for the Proposed Action or alternative. The lands are validly State selected and are not public lands as defined under ANILCA. The subsistence report dated January 13, 1999, is located in case file AA-44380.

2. Cultural Section 106 Clearance:

The Proposed Action and alternative were analyzed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It was determined that the area is clear of any cultural resources. The cultural resources report dated December 21, 1998, is located in case file AA-44380

3. Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species Clearance:

The Proposed Action and alternative were evaluated in accordance with the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. The Proposed Action and alternative were determined to have no significant effect on threatened and endangered plants and animals and their habitats. No consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is necessary pursuant to Section 7 of the Act. The T&E report dated December 29, 1998, is in case file AA-44380

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Impacts of the Proposed Action:

1. Wastes (Hazardous/Solid):

Fuel is stored in the generator building and the potential for fuel spillage is present. Spills could contaminate soils and water.

2. Visual Resources:

The cabin, out buildings and outhouse constitute a visual intrusion in a pristine landscape. Impact is low because of the small size and height of the structures. Some disturbance of wildlife results from human presence and the weekly plane trips. This disturbance is short term and of minimal impact.

3. Floodplains

Fuel spillage would occur during a major flooding event that would carry the building away. Spills could contaminate soils and water.

4. Soils and Vegetation:

Human use at the site keeps vegetation from growing on trails and paths. The area impacted is very small, less than 1/10 acre. The soils on these paths are compacted.

B. Impacts of the No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative, vegetation around and near the structures would be temporarily impacted during the removal of the structures. However, vegetation would reestablish itself within 3 to 5 years. There would be some temporary noise disturbance due to tearing down the camp structures and the outhouse.

C. Mitigation Measures for the Proposed Action:

There are no mitigating measures.

D. Mitigation Measures for the No Action Alternative:

Mitigation would not be required because the site would restore itself within 3 to 5 years.

E. Residual or Cumulative Impacts:

There are no residual or cumulative impacts under the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative.

V. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION:

- A. List of Preparers:
 - Donna Redding, Archaeologist
 - Debbie Blank, Botanist
 - Jeff Denton, Wildlife Biologist
 - Bruce Seppi, Wildlife Biologist
 - Jake Schlapfer, Outdoor Recreation Planner
 - Mike Alcorn, Hazardous Material Specialist
 - Kathy Stubbs, Realty Specialist

- B. Persons or Agencies Consulted
 - State of Alaska,
 - David Conn, Environmental Specialist
 - Al Kegler, Environmental Specialist
 - water and sewer questions